

OTSE MBAKA

this is who we are

CULTURAL LOSS, CHANGE AND RECUPERATION IN
OVAMBOLAND

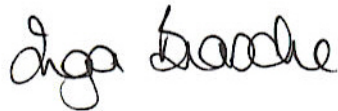
INGA BRASCHE

Thesis submitted for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy
University of Technology, Sydney
2003

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Inga Bache". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Inga" and last name "Bache" clearly distinguishable.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A thesis, like a relationship, is bigger than one person. Much bigger, in fact. Had I known in 1997 that my contract in Ovamboland would result in endeavouring to encapsulate the region's culture and complexities in writing, I may have decided to stay and watch *Water Rats* from the comfort of my lounge room! Instead I had the privilege of watching it in my lounge room in Oshikuku and observe this and numerous other cultural quirks which Ovamboland presented.

During my time in Namibia, I was lucky enough to be professionally engaged with the University of Namibia, and would like to thank Francois de Necker, Haaveshe Nekongo Nielsen and Chief Ankama for their advice and support. I would also like to acknowledge the significant input I received, both in my professional work and research activities, from the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture at a national and regional level. Rita-Louise Hofmeyr, Ervast Mtota and Bernadette Mojekwu were inspirational in their commitment to the development of arts and culture in a country so rich with talent and possibility. I was privileged to have the support of traditional authorities in my work and research, and wish to gratefully acknowledge the contribution and support of King Munkundi and King Kauluma, not only for sharing their knowledge and experience, but also for welcoming me into their royal homesteads. My interviews with Father Houbert and Father Stephen Okeke from Okatana and Oshikuku Missions provided many valuable insights.

The cultural development project which I was involved in would not have been possible without the support of the Ford Foundation. I am particularly indebted to David Chiel who served as a mentor, adviser, boss and friend. His insights and experience in donor funding and NGOs were enormously helpful and his commitment to the promotion of justice was inspiring.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of the members of the North Central Cultural Initiative, particularly Dr Stuart Keane, who helped to establish the direction of the project and whose contributions to natural resource management in the region are significant. My Namibian counterpart and former Nuuyoma Senior Secondary School colleague, Metusalem Ashipala was a fantastic help both professionally and academically. I wish Metusalem and Karen Le Roux all the very best for the future of the Rössing Foundation's enterprise development work in culture. I would also like to thank Jane Moeller for her support and friendship during the early stages of my research.

Closer to home, I would like to thank my supervisor, Devleena Ghosh, for providing helpful and insightful comments on my drafts. I have appreciated her wealth of knowledge and her guidance. Also to fellow post-graduate students, Nathalie Apouchtine and James Arvanitakis who have given me endless hours of friendship, support, punching bags and shoulders.

The support of my family and the distracting fun of my friends, particularly Joggi, Kirsty, Kara, Mai and Al has also been a great reminder that the world does turn outside the university walls.

Finally, words cannot adequately express my gratitude to the Mungandjera family. To Mbockoma, Reinharda, Ndali, Niita, Tautiko and baby Inga – thank you for teaching me so much about life, love, friendship and family. It is through the lens of the Mungandjera family that the true beauty and warmth of Namibia was revealed to me. Tangi unene.

And to Cam – my everything.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	VIII
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	X
GLOSSARY	XI
ABSTRACT	XIII
MAP OF NAMIBIA	XIV
INTRODUCTION	1
Theoretical Framework	4
Background	10
Methodology	13
Terminology and Positioning	14
Personal Engagement, Methodology & Background	24
Professional Methodologies, Interviews & Ethics	35
SECTION ONE · “LOSS”	41
IDENTITY	44
The Psychology of Loss	48
Idealism and the “Happy Savage”	54
Non-Sanctioned and Non-Doctrinal Changes	55
Names	60
Dress	62
Family Structures and Loss	67
Domestic Impact of HIV/AIDS	68
POWER AND POLITICS	73
Colonialism and the Spread of Christianity	73
Traditional Authority Challenged	75
South African Rule and Apartheid	81
Liberation Struggle	86
GLOBALISATION	90
Interdependency and Loss of Independence	93
Breakdown of Community and Individualism	97
Cultural Commodification and Commercialisation	100
SECTION TWO · CHANGE	110
IDENTITY	112
Diversity	113
HIV/AIDS and Gender Considerations	118

Case Study: PEP Guy	124
POWER AND POLITICS	126
SWAPO and Political Nationalism	126
Identification and Post-Independence Choices	130
Decentralisation and Co-ordination	133
Political Change = Social Change?	137
Accountability and Responsibility	141
Ministry of Basic Education and Culture	141
Geographical Legacies	144
GLOBALISATION	149
Local Responses to Globalisation	149
Letter to The Namibian	155
Reflections on Television	158
Case Study: Water Rats	162
Discussions on Clay Pots	165
 SECTION THREE · RECUPERATION	 171
IDENTITY	176
“Enlightenment”	176
Why Cultural Development?	183
Community Based Cultural Development – NCCI	186
Case Study: UNAM Workshop	187
Ford Foundation and the CDP	192
Dual Mandate	194
Case Study: NBC	196
Case Study: Otse Mbaka	200
POWER AND POLITICS	203
NGO Work and the Absence of Cultural Content	203
Donor vs NGO Agendas	205
Truth and Reconciliation Commission	210
SWAPO, Education & the Role of MBEC in	
Cultural Recuperation	213
Accountability and Responsibility	220
“Loss” or Preservation?	222
The Church’s Role in the Struggle	227
The Writing of Culture	231
GLOBALISATION	237
Development Work: Moral Imperative or	
Economic Strategy?	237
Politics	242
Motivations	246
Peace Corps	247

VSO	253
AVI	254
Cultural Commodification, Commercialisation and “Sustainable” Development	256
Tourism in Ovamboland	260
Return Trip and how CDP had Changed	263
 CONCLUSION	 267
APPENDICES	272
BIBLIOGRAPHY	285

ABBREVIATIONS

AVI	Australian Volunteers International
CCD	Community Cultural Development
CDP	Cultural Development Project
CoD	Congress of Democrats
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DRFN	Desert Research Foundation of Namibia
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
MBEC	Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (Namibia)
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontieres
NACOBTA	Namibian Community Based Tourism Association
NBC	Namibian Broadcasting Corporation
NCCED	North Central Community Enterprise Development Project
NCCI	North Central Cultural Initiative
NEPRU	Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit

NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NNF	Namibia Nature Foundation
NORAD	Norwegian Development Co-operation
NSHR	National Society for Human Rights
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SWABC	South West African Broadcasting Corporation (pre-NBC)
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
TNCs	Trans-National Corporations
UNDP	United Nations Development Project
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Culture and Science Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1.1 – Example of homestead	12
Figure 1.2 – Child outside homestead fence	12
Figure 1.3 – Example of landscape in Ovamboland	24

LOSS

Figure 2.1 – Hardrock Center cuca shop	47
Figure 2.2 – Hot Fire cuca shop	47
Figure 2.3 – Example of graveyard in Ovamboland	72
Figure 2.4 – Children’s graves are common due to AIDS crisis	72
Figure 2.5 – Ohungi taking place in Oshikuku, June 2000	79
Figure 2.6 – King Kauluma of Ndonga tribe, September 2000	97

CHANGE

Figure 3.1 – Ovamboland sign at the Red Line	147
Figure 3.2 – Homesteads are built on dry, sandy, rain-dependent land	147
Figure 3.3 – Centre of Oshakati – the unofficial capital of Ovamboland	148
Figure 3.4 – B-52 Bomber pattern woven into “traditional” basket	152
Figure 3.5 – Verena Endjambi at her homestead	170
Figure 3.6 – Two clap pots made by Verena Endjambi	170

RECUPERATION

Figure 4.1 – Women at Regional Cultural festival	224
Figure 4.2 – Men at Regional Cultural festival	224
Figure 4.3 – Cultural artefact displays – a new category at the festival	226
Figure 4.4 – R&B group at Nuuyoma Senior Secondary School Talent Quest	226
Figure 4.5 – Bush school where Peace Corps teacher-trainers worked	252

GLOSSARY

<i>Aahongi</i>	Christian missionaries
<i>Aakelelipo yombepo ondjapuki</i>	diviners / ancestral spirits
<i>Boer</i>	derogatory word for white South African
<i>Cuca</i>	Angolan beer
<i>Efundula</i>	female initiation ceremony
<i>Ekipa</i>	clasp/brooch worn with onyoka
<i>Ezaleko lyonyoka</i>	traditional baptism ceremony involving onyoka
<i>Kalunga</i>	God (pre-Christian and Christian God)
<i>Kwasa kwasa</i>	Zambian dance music
<i>Mahangu</i>	millet-based grain, staple of Ovambo diet
<i>Mbushandjes</i>	name-sake
<i>Meal</i>	pounded mahangu flour, used for oshifima
<i>Meekulu/Kuku</i>	old woman; Mrs; grandmother
<i>Meme</i>	woman; Mrs; mother; aunt
<i>Ohungi</i>	traditional story-telling evening
<i>Omithigululwakalo</i>	culture
<i>Ongushu y'omithigululwakalo</i>	our culture
<i>Onyoka</i>	ostrich/oyster shell necklace
<i>Oshikundu</i>	traditional beer
<i>Oshifima</i>	porridge made from mahangu
<i>Oshindjendje</i>	beads worn around waists of unmarried women

<i>Oshilumbu</i>	white person. Once derogatory, now descriptive
<i>Oshicoca-cola</i>	coca-cola
<i>Otse mbaka</i>	this is who we are
<i>Ovakriste</i>	Christians
<i>Tate</i>	man; Mr; father; uncle
<i>Tatekulu</i>	old man; Mr; grandfather

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an investigation into the terms of cultural change in north central Namibia. I am primarily concerned with issues of agency in the processes which result in cultural change, and look at both historical and contemporary agents of change in order to determine who and what impacts cultural dynamism, and what implications this has for a newly independent country within a globalised world. These issues are presented through the lenses of Identity, Power and Politics and Globalisation.

In this thesis, I posit that traditionally, Ovambo people have not been empowered in decisions regarding cultural change, which has resulted in a sense of cultural “loss”. This sense exists within the context of culture being seen as strongly associated with the past – past practices, activities, traditions and customs, as well as early development theory which insisted that such things were indicative of a backward and primitive society at odds with the principles of modernisation. In order to progress, such practices were, with and without reticence, abandoned or changed. Contemporary Ovamboland, however, represents a dynamic cultural *mélange* of traditional and modern life, which co-exist whilst negotiating issues such as the impact of HIV/AIDS and neo-liberal style of post-independence democracy. Therefore, by investigating the cultural shortfall in traditional development theory, and using examples of different forms of cultural development, I suggest that when culture is seen as an important consideration of development, as well as supported as a field of development in its own right, cultural identity becomes clearer, and cultural futures are determined more democratically.

In order to demonstrate these ideas, I am drawing from a number of case studies in which I was professionally involved, as well as through interviews conducted in the field. By presenting the differing agendas of international engagement in development work as well as different types of cultural development projects, I will highlight the complexities of development theory in practice, particularly when capital is involved, and how these relate to the wider issues of cultural preservation versus cultural change.

[illegible]